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Who's to Judge? The Conundrum of Evaluative Criteria for Autoethnographic Research

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BiblioBob and The Empiricists of DOOM!



Another in the BiblioBob Adventure Series

....as we meet up with BiblioBob,
he is sitting in his office at
Portlandia State University.

He's reveling in the completion of
his article on Indigenous research
methodology.

His email *pings* - it's a note from a
colleague, Anne-Marie.....

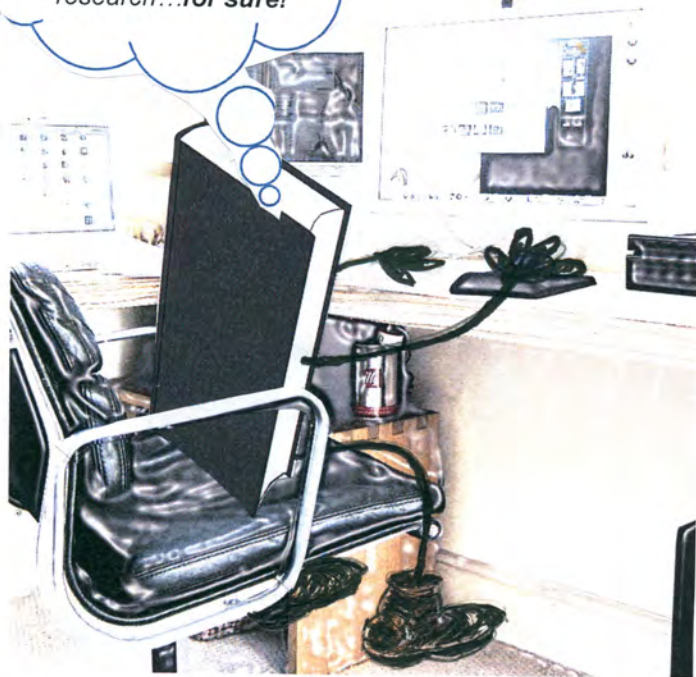
"You' ve got mail!"

Hey Biblio,

Wanna do an Autoethnography project...? My friend Dr. Rick & I are geeked!

*Autoethnography...
gotta google that.*

*Whoah! That's so
resonant with
Indigenous
research...**for sure!***



The emails flew....

Hey A.M.,

Great idea – let's do some autoethnography!

Biblio,

How can we get the idea out to librarians? A book? In a journal...?

A.M.,

What about a bunch of articles? I know some editors I could ask....

Biblio,

Wunderbar!

*But, wunderbar was about to
turn into sturm und drang...*



The journal editors morphed into the gatekeepers of scholarship, General Izable and Objectivus —

the Empiricists of Doom...



"What is Au-to-eth-nog-raph-y?"

"How would you review them?"

"Where is rigor?"

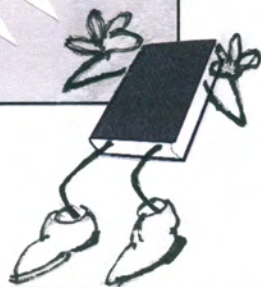
"They are not RESEARCH!"

"Self-reflection, not acceptable!"

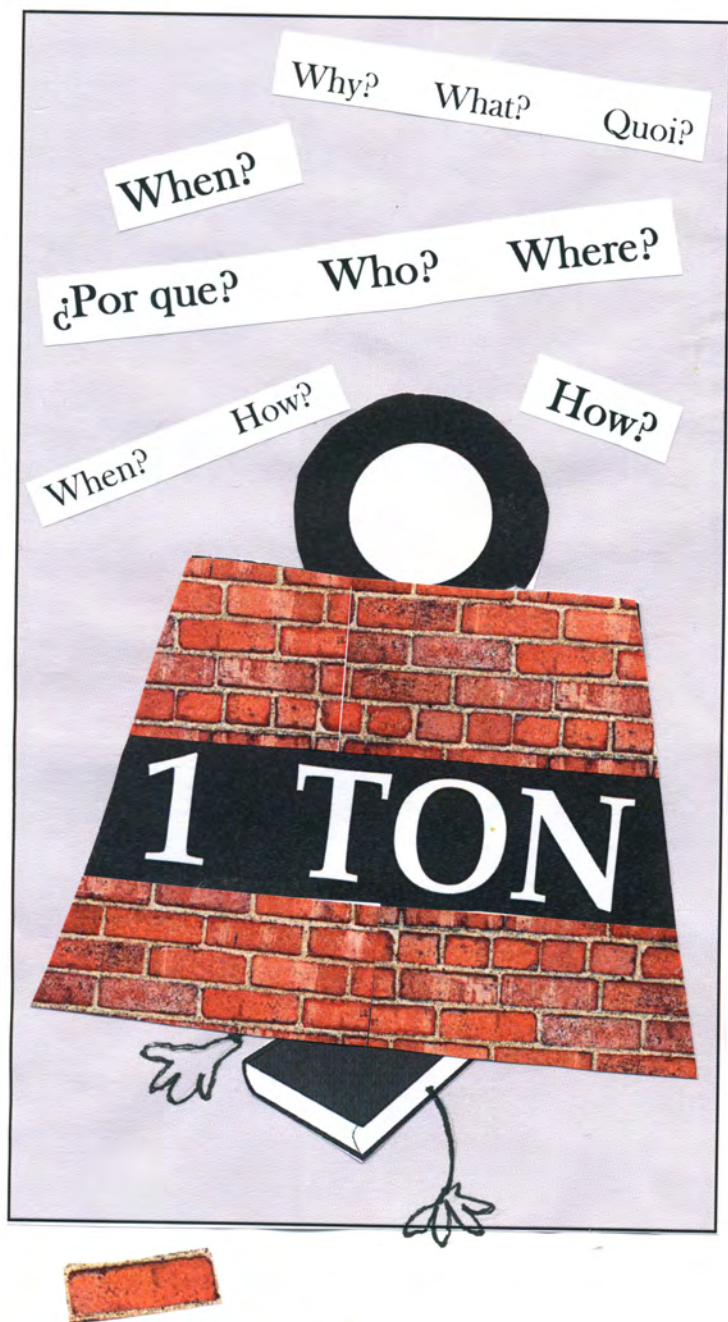
"Can't rewrite rules of scholarship!"

"Are they just biographies dressed up in suits?"

"Are they opinion pieces?"



Their questions hit me like a ...



But from their questions I began to construct my research project, brick by brick....

"What criteria can be used to judge Autoethnographies?"

"Why do librarians privilege objectivity and data?"

"How is it relevant to libraries?"

"What is Autoethnography?"

And I began to use my BibloBob research superpowers to find answers to these questions....



I descended from the research mountaintop.

I had found potential evaluative criteria!

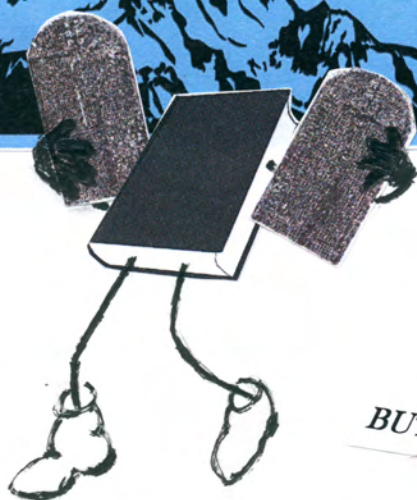
Revealing the Self

Exploring Culture/Society

Storycraft

Ethics

Social Justice & Transformation



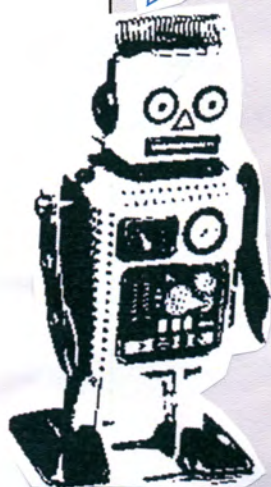
BUT,



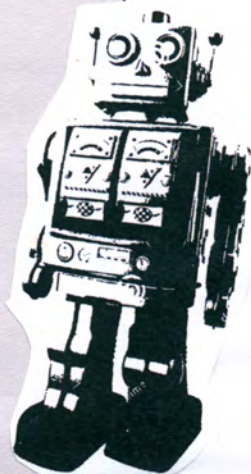
a nagging doubt arose....

We still CONTROL you!

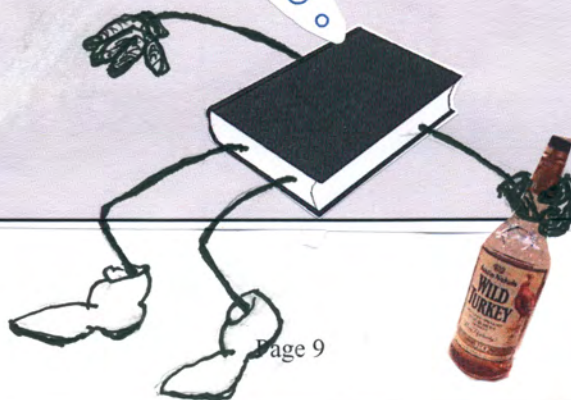
Ha HA Ha Ha HA...



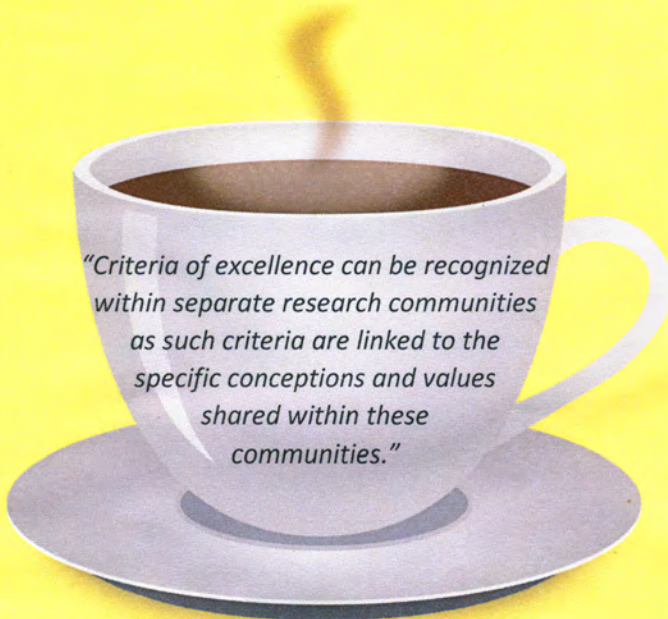
"There is no external reference point from which to make the selection about which criteria to adopt...any attempt to universalize preagreed criteria is therefore **bound to fail.**" —Garratt & Hodkinson



With these new criteria, was I just setting up new Guardians of Scholarship?



But then Gergen sobered me up, like a hot cup of java....



"Criteria of excellence can be recognized within separate research communities as such criteria are linked to the specific conceptions and values shared within these communities."

Each autoethnography author
creating their own criteria — this may be the
way forward....

With the help of the Deus X. Machina device, I was transported to the peaceful planet of NEMLA....



....a place where myriad research methodologies bloom.

The end.

Garratt, D., & Hodkinson, P. (1998). Can there be criteria for selecting research criteria?—A hermeneutical analysis of an inescapable dilemma. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 4(4), 515-539.

Gergen, K. J. (2014). Pursuing excellence in qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Psychology*, 1(1), 49-60.

Happy trails from

BibloBob™, Researcher Extraordinaire!

(Biblio)Bob Schroeder

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